

Three or four days ago from the time of this writing, a light mist turned into a slow rain over the Shortgrass Country. Reports began to come in of scant halves to full inches in the rain gauges. San Angelo, so the weather station said, had the first measurable precipitation in 42 days. Out in the country, the herders had stopped counting in days. What we were counting was the amount of sacks to the end. Days don't matter in our standard of values.

Whether to call the showers a drouth breaker won't be settled until more clouds pass over. The most pressing problem those showers caused was the sudden change from dusty air to fresh air.

As you would imagine, on the first morning of the rain, the citizens rushed outdoors to check their gauges. I'm certain that everyone was inhaling and exhaling under the same force that they had been breathing the previous 50/50 combination of air and dirt. It was a dangerous situation for them to switch over from a near solid to a light gas without a depressurizing chamber to adjust for the difference.

One thing that may have diverted a disaster was the rain falling in the night, as all Shortgrassers are heavy, deep snorers. Even inside our closed houses, the nocturnal thunder may have saved countless prolapsed lungs and ruptured windpipes.

Understand, I don't go around listening to people moving at night but I've been told by out-of-state guests to hunting lodges, that a tuned-up, full blast Shortgrass snorer could make sleeping in grizzly bear's winter den seem like a chance to hear a kid play Yankee Doodle on a fife.

I am really not one to criticize snoring. In the awful days of tension before they had that big nine-ball tournament up in Vegas, Child who Sits in the Sun came close to smothering me with a death mask for a few restless nights. She said the high crescendo sounded worse than a ship accident; however injuns have a way with words, so I wasn't too impressed with her evaluation.

Here at the ranch, we missed one feed run, arguing whether it was too wet to feed. You probably know how a bunch of cowboys take over a house in wet weather. The rain can't be appreciated for emptying the ash trays and making coffee. By the time we'd decided that pouring cake in the thin layers of mud wasn't going to be as wasteful as pouring the same had been in thick dust, it was too late to feed anything but the milk cow and the saddle horses. The lack of feed wasn't really a problem because that was offset by an increase in morals.

Perhaps that half-inch shower will change the humor of the clouds. A Christmas snow and a New Year's rain would make a perfect holiday for us. At least we now have something to breathe, which makes us the luckiest guys around.